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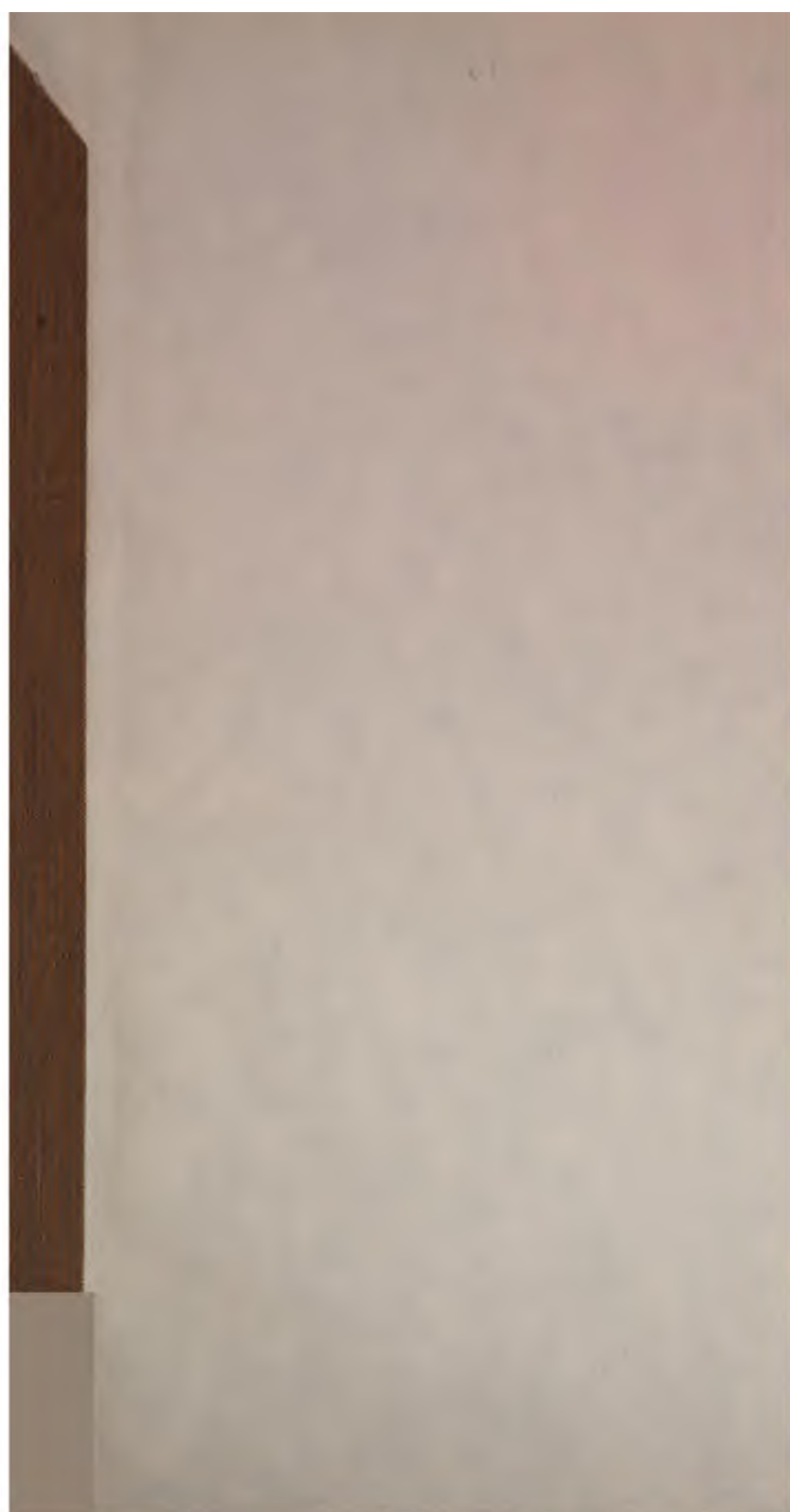
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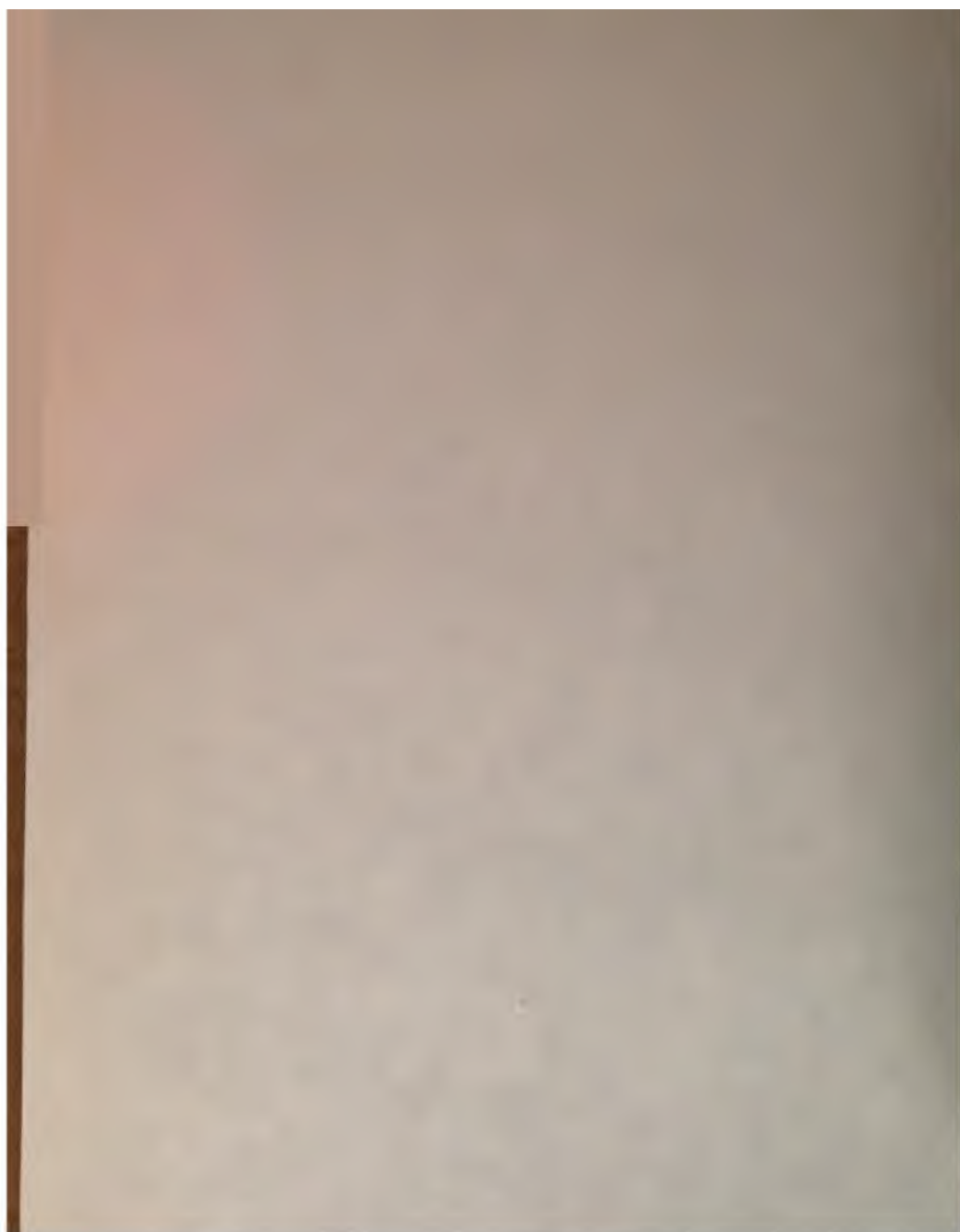
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THE TRUSTEES OF THE JOHN F. SLATER FUND

OCCASIONAL PAPERS, No. 9

A REPORT
CONCERNING THE
COLORED WOMEN OF THE SOUTH

BY

MRS. E. C. HOBSON

AND

MRS. C. E. HOPKINS

BALTIMORE

PUBLISHED BY THE TRUSTEES

1896

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* Died in office.

† Resigned.

ANNOUNCEMENT.

The Trustees of the John F. Slater Fund propose to publish from time to time papers that relate to the education of the colored race. These papers are designed to furnish information to those who are concerned in the administration of schools, and also to those who by their official stations are called upon to act or to advise in respect to the care of such institutions.

The Trustees believe that the experimental period in the education of the blacks is drawing to a close. Certain principles that were doubted thirty years ago now appear to be generally recognized as sound. In the next thirty years better systems will undoubtedly prevail, and the aid of the separate States is likely to be more and more freely bestowed. There will also be abundant room for continued generosity on the part of individuals and associations. It is to encourage and assist the workers and the thinkers that these papers will be published.

Each paper, excepting the first number (made up chiefly of official documents), will be the utterance of the writer whose name is attached to it, the Trustees disclaiming in advance all responsibility for the statement of facts and opinions.

A REPORT CONCERNING THE COLORED WOMEN OF THE SOUTH.

TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE JOHN F. SLATER FUND.

Gentlemen:—We have the honor to submit the following report of a recent tour (made at the request of your Board) for the purpose of ascertaining the condition, mental and moral, of the colored women of the South.

We started on October 20th, 1895. Our tour was confined to the five Central States,—Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. We visited twenty-four schools and institutions, examined the life of the people in the one-roomed cabin of the plantation and road-side, in the hovels of the manufacturing towns, as well as the neat and attractive homes which are the result of industry and thrift aided by education. We conversed with colored clergymen, lawyers, doctors, druggists, artisans, cotton-factors and laborers, with male and female teachers in educational and industrial schools, with trained nurses and servants, with wives and mothers, and with girls in and out of the schools.

If the conclusions we draw should seem optimistic, it should be remembered that we received our impressions from negroes at their best, in the five states we visited, as most of them under thirty years of age have come under the influence of

the great schools which have been established by northern philanthropy.

We found the graduates of these schools¹ intelligent, modest, self-respecting, clear sighted and frank in regard to the shortcomings and defects of their race, and while grateful for all that has been done for them, anxious to help themselves, and full of confidence and hope for the future. Among those not actually in the schools we found the desire for education and for the decencies of life to be intense, and parents appear to be willing to make the greatest sacrifices to secure for their children better advantages.

But the negro women of the South are subject to temptations, of which their white sisters of the North have no appreciation, and which come to them from the days of their race enslavement. They are still the victims of the white man under a survival of a system tacitly recognized, which deprives them

¹Institutions visited :—

Hampden Industrial Institute.....	Hampton, Va.
Whittier School.....	Hampton, Va.
Dixie Hospital.....	Hampton, Va.
St. Paul's School.....	Lawrenceville, Va.
Kittrell Industrial School.....	North Carolina.
Shaw University.....	Raleigh, N. C.
St. Augustine School.....	Raleigh, N. C.
Bennet Seminary.....	Greensboro, N. C.
Scotia Seminary.....	Concord, N. C.
Benedict College.....	Columbia, S. C.
Allen College.....	Columbia, S. C.
Claffin University.....	Orangeburg, S. C.
Avery Institute.....	Charleston, S. C.
White Public School.....	Charleston, S. C.
Haven School.....	Savannah, Ga.
Beach Institute.....	Savannah, Ga.
Clark University.....	Atlanta, Ga.
Tuskegee Industrial Institute.....	Tuskegee, Ala.
Miss Georgia Washington's School and...	{ Between Tuskegee and Montgomery, Ala.
Miss Bowen's Industrial School.....	
Miss White's Industrial School.....	Montgomery, Ala.
State Normal School.....	Montgomery, Ala.
Swayne Public School.....	Montgomery, Ala.

of the sympathy and help of the Southern white women, and to meet such temptations the negro woman can only offer the resistance of a low moral standard, an inheritance from the system of slavery, made still lower from a life-long residence in a one-roomed cabin.

Remove a girl early from such degrading environment, send her home to her people with the changed idea of personal decency acquired by residence at one of the training schools, and she becomes at once a powerful agent for good in her family and neighborhood. Dr. Curry, the able Secretary of the Slater and Peabody Trusts, says :

"Of the desire of the colored people for education the proof is conclusive, and of their capacity to receive mental culture there is not a shade of a reason to support an adverse hypothesis."¹

It was a great surprise to us to learn that, at all the schools we visited, the pupils (except in the state schools) pay from five to seven dollars a month for board and tuition. Those who cannot pay, work ten hours a day for the privilege of two hours schooling in the evening. It was in this way Booker Washington obtained his education, working his way one hundred miles to reach Hampton. The day scholars in two rural schools we visited in the black belt of Alabama paid one dollar a month for their tuition for eight months, as the state only pays, on an average, thirty dollars a month to a teacher for three months, and provides neither school-house nor books.

Where, we ask, do we find among the well-to-do working classes of the North, to say nothing of the poorest, such an effort to educate their children? Of the moral effect of the education so obtained there seems to be no question.

The leaders of the race say, "all we ask is time and a fair chance," and judging of their future by their past since the emancipation, we think they are right. We were surprised

¹"Education of the Negroes since 1860," by J. L. M. Curry, LL. D. Occasional Papers, No. 3.

at their clear judgment and general information about their people, at their freedom from malice, and kindly feeling toward the whites, and in this connection we may quote a conversation with Mr. Chavis, a negro graduate of Gammon Theological Seminary, and in charge of the Bennet School at Greensboro, N. C. He says:

"The whites complain that the educated negro declines 'hired work' and that education is ruining him. Those men who have acquired a profession or trade, or learned how to cultivate the land on scientific principles, refuse to enter the employ of the whites at six or eight dollars a month, because independently they can earn more, and then the whites say 'there is a negro spoiled by education.'

"The girls who graduate from the schools have acquired knowledge which enables them to support themselves at good wages until they marry, which they generally do five years after they graduate, generally to the men with whom they have been educated. If they by chance go into domestic service, they get from four to six dollars a month, and are treated as in the old slave days, which they naturally resent; they therefore seek independent occupations."

"How about their morals?" we asked.

"I can confidently assert, that of the girls I have educated very few have gone astray, and in the face of temptations to which the whites are not subjected. We teach them it is a part of their duty in life to encourage and guide their ignorant sisters. We strive in this school to found our education upon a strong Christian basis, and we feel that God has already blessed our work."

"What occupations are open to your young people?"

"The men become clergymen, doctors, lawyers, apothecaries and teachers. Many of the trades are now open to them, thanks to the industrial schools. They are buying land, and through the education they obtain at Hampton and Tuskegee they are cultivating it more intelligently. They have not as yet gone much into business, owing to the want of capital."

"In the practice of the professions you mention, are they employed by the whites?"

"Hardly at all; but we are eight millions of people, and that is a nation in itself, so that we are independent in that respect, though no doubt in time the whites will become accustomed to seeing us occupying positions requiring education and intelligence, and will employ us."

"Where do your best pupils come from?"

"From the rural districts. The girls and boys from the country are more anxious to learn, more diligent and ambitious. They turn out better than those from the towns, who are lazy, and are always longing for diversions and '*fascinating frivolities*.'"

From Mr. and Mrs. Satterfield (white), of Scotia Seminary, N. C., we received similar replies to the same questions. Mr. Satterfield said:

"We have been here many years, and I have carefully followed the lives of my girls after they have left, and I can safely say that I can count on the fingers of one hand those who have gone astray. As a rule they marry within five years after they graduate, and their chief ambition is to have comfortable, Christian homes. As they generally marry the young men who have had educations like their own, both work for the same object. In fact," he added, "the character and intelligence of the negro, like the whites, is the result of environment and heredity, and these factors produce corresponding results upon each."

In this opinion all the white teachers we saw agreed, from Hampton to Montgomery, without exception. We also learned that the teachers discover no difference in mental capacity between the Afro-Americans of pure blood and those who have an admixture of white blood.

At Tuskegee, Mrs. Booker Washington gathered, from within a radius of seven miles, about thirty married women that we might talk with them, and hear about their lives. Some of them walked seven miles to meet the "Northern

Ladies," and they ranged in age from thirty to seventy years. None had less than five children, and one had had nineteen. Their husbands were all laborers. Some few owned their land and houses, though most of these were so heavily mortgaged as to give them no chance to get ahead, interest sometimes running as high as 20 per cent. Their stories reminded us of the accounts that have come from Russia of the oppression of the peasants by the Jews, which led to the edicts of expulsion of the latter by the late Czar.

These women, however, had all come under the influence which Mr. and Mrs. Booker Washington exercise at Tuskegee. They are striving to have more decent homes, to educate their children, and to get out of debt. They have taken the first step toward elevation; they have learned what is better, and are willing and anxious to work for it.

The negro problem of which we hear so much does not seem to us as difficult to solve as the labor problem of the North, complicated as that is by the mixture of races and religions. The negroes, on the contrary, are a homogeneous race, Afro-Americans, knowing no other country than the United States, and desiring no other; agricultural in their habits and tastes, intensely attached to the soil, loyal to the government, and mostly Protestant in faith, except in Louisiana and parts of Florida.

The Afro-American to-day in the five central Southern States is not so degraded or ignorant as was the French peasant before the revolution of 1792. In fact he is less degraded, for while his poverty and ignorance are no greater, he is not unjustly oppressed nor weighed down by taxation.

Mr. Arthur Young, whose account of his travels in France on the eve of the revolution is quoted authoritatively by historians, states:¹ "Husbandry is not much further advanced

¹ See "Condition of France in the Travels of Arthur Young in the years 1787, '88, '89, undertaken more particularly with a view of ascertaining the cultivation, wealth, resources and national prosperity of the Kingdom of France."

than among the Hurons, and the people almost as wild as their country. Their houses brutally filthy, no windows, no other light than the door, mud floors and chimneys. The people can neither read nor write, girls and women terribly ragged, if possible worse clad than with no clothes at all. All without shoes and stockings. People so ignorant that they know nothing of their own weights and measures."

From this deplorable condition, the French peasant has risen in a hundred years to be the most thrifty, industrious and intelligent agriculturist in Europe.

With this example before us, one may reasonably expect, judging from his progress in the last twenty-five years, that the Afro-American, by the middle of the 20th century, may stand side by side with the other races now crowding into the Republic. We were told at Hampton that the students who now apply for entrance are nearly as advanced as those who graduated twenty years ago, and at the Scotia School for girls they are commencing to receive the daughters of their first graduates, and find these know nearly as much on entering as their mothers did when they left.

In 1890, only a generation after they were emancipated, not less than forty-three out of every hundred negroes of ten years of age and over were able to read and write. In 1870 only three per cent. of all negroes attended school, and in twenty years the increase was nearly nineteen per cent. of all negroes. The proportion of negro school children increased at a far more rapid rate than white school children, and in 1890 the proportion was nearly equal.¹

In 1877-78 the attendance in private institutions was 12,146; in 1894-95 the attendance was 25,717.²

¹ See "Statistics of the Negroes in the United States," by Henry Gannett, U. S. Geological Survey. Occasional Papers, No. 4.

² The statistics of the Bureau of Education show an increase in 1895 over 1878 of 185 per cent. in the number of students in colored schools both public and private. The attendance in private institutions more than doubled. The number of students in public institutions was nearly thirteen times as great as in 1878.

But help from the North must still continue, and if possible increase. Matters have not yet so adjusted themselves in the South as to warrant the leaving the educational interests of the colored race altogether to the hands of the Southern whites, and the negroes instinctively turn to the Northern teachers for education and guidance, notwithstanding the large appropriations made for schools by the Southern whites.

The leaders of the race, both white and black, are now alive to the importance of industrial education, and most of the schools we visited had introduced manual labor of various kinds as a part of the curriculum, and where it had not been done the additional expense had been the obstacle. Everywhere we found the strongest desire on the part of a large number of girls to learn the profession of nursing, and those who have already acquired it have been very successful, the whites willingly employing them at high wages—from \$10 to even \$20 a week. Some schools already announce a course of training, but they seem to be unaware that a nurse can no more be trained without a hospital, than a cook without a kitchen. We found but two training schools attached to hospitals during our travels, the Dixie at Hampton, which is doing excellent work and should be assisted in order to strengthen and extend it, and that at Spelman, Atlanta, where there is a small hospital in which they nurse their own sick under an excellent Superintendent, and have already sent out some nurses with satisfactory results, and would be glad to extend the work if they could receive assistance in paying teachers.

In Savannah at a meeting where we met nineteen of the leading colored men of the place, they assured us of their ability to start a small hospital, if they could be assisted in the salaries of teachers to train the pupil nurses. None ask support, merely help.

Several of the schools we visited require just a little help to make them very prosperous and useful. Those at Lawrenceville, Va., and Kittrell, N. C., managed by Hampton graduates, are especially to be commended and should be

strengthened. A good nursing school might be established at Mr. Joyner's school at Columbia, S. C., where they have a little hospital, closed for want of means. Five hundred dollars given to Claflin would enable it to do the same work. Especially would we urge assistance to the two rural schools in the black belt of Alabama, where Hampton and Tuskegee graduates are bravely toiling and truly civilizing the people around them.

As we have said, we saw the negroes at their best in the institutions we visited, and among those graduates who were pursuing their avocations. These served to show the possibilities of the race, their aptitude for acquiring knowledge and amassing property. But the great mass still lies under the burden of poverty and ignorance—and it is this mass that must be lifted up, before we can hope for any permanent elevation of the race,—and that must be done by work in the cabins and among the women. It is impossible to look for a moral community, where the women have never been taught by example and precept that Christian virtue which raises the human being above the animal.

It is perhaps unwise at this time to give full expression to our views regarding the moral condition of the negro women. It is sufficient to say that the reports that had been made to us by others, before we undertook our investigations, were fully confirmed, and we hope that in the near future the women of the South will become so interested and roused to the importance of the subject that they may be inclined to cooperate with the women of the North in some plan for the elevation of these descendants of their former servants. Meanwhile, we would make the following suggestions to the Trustees of the Slater Fund in regard to the special object of our mission—the elevation of the women :

The elevation should commence at the bottom. We would propose to employ pious, intelligent women, white or colored, to travel in the rural districts of say Virginia and Alabama, and to start Mothers' meetings, where the average ignorant

woman, who cannot now hope to receive an education, may at least be taught the way to keep a decent home and to elevate the moral standard of her humble life. Through her to inspire her husband and children with the same aspirations, so that if there be no public school in their vicinity they may both learn to desire and seek to obtain one started by the State. The State should then be districted, and two or three central schools in each district should be so aided as to give courses of lessons in sewing, cooking, and "First Aid to Injured."

These branches of instruction, so vital to woman, might be taught by teachers of each branch (paid by the Slater Trust) passing from school to school, giving a course of lessons at each, and leaving the pupils to pursue the study until the teachers return to examine them. These examinations would enable the teacher to determine the capacity of the girls and their fitness to be sent to the higher schools, where many now go when unfitted to enter and occupy places which should be filled by girls of superior ability. By this process of selection, the most intelligent and ambitious could enter Hampton, Tuskegee, Spelman, etc., while those of less ability will have learned the decencies of life, the elements of school education, and those feminine occupations which will fit them to be good wives and mothers.

By giving them courses in "First Aid," they will learn how to act in sudden emergencies, the importance of cleanliness and good air, and the general principles of caring for their sick and their children.

The kind of work we propose to do cannot be done by the State at present. It is personal influence that is required; it is the highest missionary spirit which can alone inspire it. No board of education appointed by any Government or State authority can choose such agents. Each woman who undertakes it, must go for the love of the work, and must be selected by those who know its needs. The money so liberally expended by the North would never have produced the results we have seen, if it had been given to the State; it is because

it has passed through the hands of devoted Christian men and women who by precept and example have taught the beauty of honor, truthfulness and purity of life, that the speech was made possible at Atlanta, which elicited the applause and drew tears from the thousands who listened to it.

In conclusion, we would respectfully urge the appropriation by the Slater Trust of a few thousand dollars to be expended for a few years as an experiment in the manner we have suggested. If the work is carefully supervised, we are convinced that it will be of incalculable value in enlarging the opportunities for self-support and usefulness among the rising generation of colored girls, and, through them, influence for good thousands of the colored race.

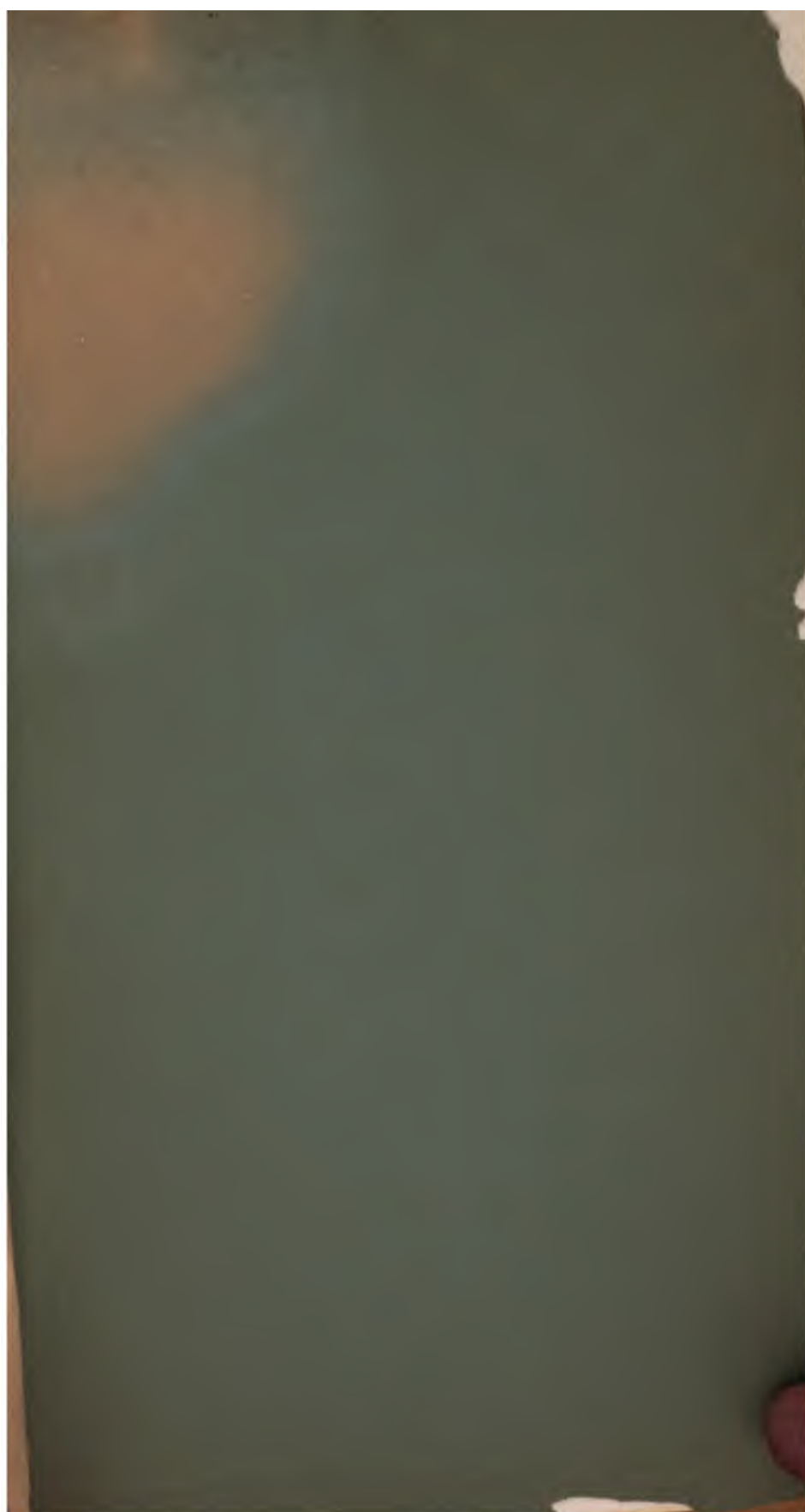
Respectfully submitted,

ELIZABETH C. HOBSON,
CHARLOTTE EVERETT HOPKINS.

DECEMBER, 1895.

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